

April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016  
5:30 PM

The City Council of the City of Inverness met on the above date in **Workshop Session on Oak Ridge Cemetery Expansion**, at 212 W. Main Street with the following members present:

President Hepfer  
Vice President Ryan  
Councilwoman Bega  
Councilman McBride  
Councilman Hinkle  
Mayor Plaisted (Not Present)

Also present were City Manager DiGiovanni, Asst. City Manager Williams, Deputy Clerk Jackson, and Clerk Davis.

The meeting was called for by the following Notice to all council, mayor, media, as well as publicly posted.

**NOTICE**

DATE: April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016

PLEASE BE ADVISED, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF INVERNESS, FLORIDA, WILL MEET IN A WORKSHOP SESSION ON **THURSDAY, APRIL 21<sup>ST</sup>, 2016, @ 5:30PM** AT THE 212 W. MAIN STREET, INVERNESS, FLORIDA FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING:

**“OAK RIDGE CEMETERY EXPANSION”**

/s/ David Ryan  
President of City Council

City Manager DiGiovanni addressed Council regarding the Oak Ridge Cemetery and highlighted historical information. He stated the last workshop regarding the cemetery was approximately 12 years ago. The cemetery has not been ignored but there have been many large projects that came before it, for instance the IGC building, Valerie Theatre, road and park improvements, and events. City Manager noted it was in the early 1980s when the city took possession of the cemetery, perpetual care fund, and some inventory files. City staff is not accustomed to dealing with cemetery issues; however, the operation and sales of the cemetery must come back to city control for it to be successful moving forward. Around 1995 the perpetual care fund became more healthy and we looked at steps to increase the sale of the lots, etc. He stated the current budget is \$41,000 for the cemetery with sales of approximately \$5,500 per year. The inventory of spaces in the cemetery is roughly 4400 with around 142 remaining spaces available for traditional burial sale. So far this year there have been 6 sales and 9 burials.

In 1988, the National Cemetery opened in Bushnell at 52 acres in size, and now has 129,000 burials to date. The National Cemetery has changed the complexity of other

cemeteries like Oak Ridge, and affected the number of interments in local cemeteries. From 1981 until present day society has also changed regarding burials and cemeteries. We face an unsustainable situation and must confront the problem. The market has shifted along with cultural beliefs, needs, expectations, and acceptance. The bottom line is if nothing is done with the Oak Ridge Cemetery there will be a fiscal collapse in about 10 years. We need to look at goals and needs and challenges, and fix what isn't working and change everything else by retooling the approach to marketing, sales, layout, operations and management. This will also involve the review and realignment of ordinance language and policies.

City Manager DiGiovanni then introduced Bruce Jordan who is a professional in this field with over 22 years experience. Mr. Jordan worked in the legislative and executive branches of Florida government as a legislative aide and special assistant to the Governor in the executive office of the external affairs. He also has served as executive director and lobbyist for the Florida funeral and cemetery association. He was instrumental in sun-setting antiquated Florida statutes dealing with the funeral and cemetery industry and helped compose and pass a complete new chapter of laws and rules. Mr. Jordan has businesses in the human and pet sectors of the interment industry and has the only pet funeral home with the crematory in this area. He is certified in human and pet loss grief support.

Mr. Jordan began the presentation with what a cemetery is about. He presented many slides including conceptual plans of the new Southeast addition and various photos of options with columbariums, estate lots, etc. He spoke of how this will not be in competition with local funeral homes but will aid them by providing more options than what we have now. There were photos of spaces with issues now that can be found in the Oak Ridge Cemetery now and displayed photos of the various options available. He spoke of the need for constant oversight and communication for the cemetery regarding maintenance, interments, inurnments, etc. He noted there will be changes to the rules and regulations regarding the cemetery. Bruce compared the number of full body burials in a typical lot to how many cremations a columbarium would hold in the same amount of space. He spoke of the liability involved regarding cemetery ownership. He spoke of the necessity to keep the community's trust in the Oak Ridge Cemetery. He highlighted some of the changes that need to be made in the rules and regulations. He spoke of how the cremation rate keeps rising and how we need to meet that demand regarding human and pet remains. He referenced the new expansion area, the phosphate "pit", and the various aspects of the 3.91 acres. Bruce presented various photos of other cemeteries and the options they have used.

Council members questioned if there has been any incidents of vandalism, ownership of the property, etc.

Councilman McBride questioned the cost of a spot in the columbarium compared to a burial right in Oak Ridge today.

City Manager DiGiovanni explained to Council that the matter of cost is a long way down the road. This workshop is to present Council some of the options that can be incorporated into our cemetery to keep it relevant for future use.

Mr. Jordan spoke to the shift to cremation and the portability, affordability, and other aspects of the form of disposition of a loved one.

City Manager concluded the presentation by noting the long process to achieve what needs to be done. The reality is the times, society, and expectations have changed. Now the cemetery needs to change to keep up with today, and the cemetery brings a complexity that government finds unusual. We need to look at the new section and manage it in a way that it brings in sufficient revenues to maintain the entire cemetery.

Councilman Hinkle questioned about constructing columbariums or adding cremation benches in the older sections, with Bruce stating there are so many issues in the older sections. Councilman stated he likes the idea of the expansion.

Councilwoman Hepfer stated she is excited about the changes in the future of the cemetery and loves the idea.

Councilman McBride noted he liked everything that he has seen and heard but wonders about the future demands, with Bruce stating at this time the funeral homes can only sell what we have to offer, which is limited.

Council President Ryan stated Council is being asked to imagine what this could look like, with City Manager agreeing.

The workshop adjourned at 6:53pm

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City Clerk

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Council President